

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City
January 31, 2023

The President. Thank you very much. Stacey, thank you as well. Appreciate it. And, particularly, thank your daughter for permission to be here. [*Laughter*]

You know, this is what in our business we call a busman's holiday. The leader of the Senate has to listen to me again. [*Laughter*]

Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer. Always——

The President. Meaning the Senator from Jersey has to be there in the back corner. If I were you, I'd check if that door opens so you could sneak out. [*Laughter*]

And who else is here, the elected officials——

Audience member. Kirsten.

The President. By the way, she is the best thing New York has got going for it. And by the way, she changed the law and the military, in terms of how women are treated in the military. It's a big deal.

Look, let me say that one of the things that—when I ran—and a lot of you helped me when I announced back in 2020—I said I was running for three reasons. One was to restore the soul of America. And the second one was to rebuild the country from the middle out and the bottom down—the bottom up and the middle out, because that way, the poor have a shot, the middle class do well, and the wealthy still do very well. And thirdly was to unite the country.

The third is turning out to be the hardest thing to do. But we're getting there. We're getting there. And there's an awful lot that we're—and by the way, I wouldn't have been able to do any of the things that were referenced a moment ago without the Democratic representatives who are in here. And I mean that sincerely.

They not only helped; they went to war for me. They went to war for the positions we took. And it's paying off. I mean, you know, we've created, like you said, more jobs than any administration has in 2 years. We have 750,000 new manufacturing jobs.

Like I said earlier today, where is it written that we can't be the manufacturing capital of the world? We are exporting product and importing jobs, as opposed to exporting jobs and, you know, the other way around.

So there's a lot—but there's a lot more to do, because there's a lot of people that are still being left behind in areas of the country that are feeling alienated by where they are. And a lot of it has to do with sins of the past and hard feelings that exist, because for a while—it reminds me a little bit of when I got elected when I was a 29-year-old kid in 1972.

I became a close friend with George McGovern. But you remember, we were—there was a—the liberals in those days were referred to as "limousine liberals." We didn't pay nearly as much attention to working class folks as we used to. And the same thing is happening today.

You look at—and we were just talking—I was just being instructed. But she did a polling—data that was done: "Why is the country so divided? Why do we remain divided?" And look how divided we are based on geography.

You know, one of the reasons why, with your help, I won in 2020 was I was able to bring back a significant number of women who were in suburbia. They used to almost all work—or vote for us. And not enough, but a fair number of blue-collar workers. But blue-collar workers used to always be our folks. They were with us from the beginning. They were the people who thought we cared most about them.

Well, right now, you know, the favorability of most Democrats is in the 60s among college-educated people. And people without a college education, it's closer down in the 40s and below, because a lot of people think we left them behind. And it has to do more with attitude and—than it does with policy.

And so we've gone out of our way, with Chuck's great help in the Senate, to try to focus on these folks.

For example, today we announced that, with the Recovery Act—excuse me, with the infrastructure bill that we passed, we're going to, over time, spend \$16 billion renovating the entire transportation system here in New York City.

But it's going to have a profound impact on everything that—from—you know, look, this is not your father's Republican Party. *[Laughter]* This is—no, I really mean it. This is a different breed of cat. These guys—I mean, they have been straight out—I know the press is here; they've heard me say this before—they say they want to get rid of Social Security. Now, there—now I'm told that the leader is saying, no, he didn't—they don't mean that. *[Laughter]*

They want to get rid of Social Security and Medicare. They—because they want to cut the deficit. They want to make sure we can move—moving toward dealing with the national debt.

Well, I'd just point out that the last guy who was President increased the national debt that was over 225 years and increased the entirety of that debt by 25 percent in 4 years. In 4 years. The 2 years since we've been in power, we've reduced the national debt, so far, \$1.7 trillion in 2 years. The debt, \$1.7 trillion.

And we still grew the economy. But we did it because we paid for everything. We paid for everything, and we grew the economy at the same time.

We're finding ourselves in a situation where you talk about this party denying the existence of climate change. That is not true. Well, you ought to have traveled with me on at least 16, 17 helicopter flights around America where I've literally watched more timber burn to the ground than the entire State of Missouri. As you go through everywhere from New Mexico all the way up to Idaho and all the West Coast. And it's just incredible the damage being done.

And you know, we have a—if we don't stay under 1.5 degrees Celsius increase—we're going to have a real problem. It's the single most existential threat to humanity we've ever faced, including nuclear weapons. And so we have a real big problem.

We inherited a foreign policy that said that—"America first," which basically put America last. We lost more of our friends and allies than any time in modern American history.

We are at a point where, much to my—as I know Cory and others know, much of my time has been spent just putting back together the NATO alliance, the European Union, our relationships with Japan and South Korea, what's going on in the South Pacific.

I mean, I've spent literally hundreds of hours, either in person and/or on Zoom, with these world leaders putting them back together. And they're together, because they understand that America is back.

I showed up at the first meeting of the G-7, when I got elected President, in England. And I sat down, and I said, "America is back." And Macron looked at me said, and he said, "For how long?" [*Laughter*] No, for real. "For how long?"

You know, we had significant divisions within Europe about what we're going to do not just about Ukraine, but about unity overall. What was the role of the European Union? It was—it turns out it's a great adjunct to everything we're doing, if we do it correctly. But, in fact, the last guy said it was a problem; we—it shouldn't exist, it shouldn't be around.

So I guess what I'm saying is that it was a pretty low bar to climb over, but there was an awful lot of—an awful lot of ground to be made up.

And you think that what would happen is that there would be a little bit of, as we Catholics say, an epiphany in the Republican Party. Well, instead it's been the exact opposite. They've just doubled down.

Look at what the present leader of the Republican Party—a decent man, I think—McCarthy—look what he had to do. He had to make commitments that are just absolutely off the wall for a Speaker of the House to make in terms of being able to become the leader.

I can't imagine, Chuck, you making one of those commitments. [*Laughter*]

Leader Schumer. It took us one vote, and it was unanimous. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, beyond that, look——

Audience member. I voted twice. [*Laughter*]

The President. Beyond that, look, you know, I—when I got elected—and I'll end this in a little bit. But to your—when I got elected when I was a kid, when I was—I wasn't old enough, as Karen Adler's family remembers, because her dad helped me out early on—was I found myself—I was only 29 years old; you had to be 30 to be sworn in. But I got elected before I was 30. But at time to be sworn in—17 days later, I became eligible to serve.

And because I won so young, and I won against a guy—he was a decent man; he supported me the next time I ran. His name was J. Caleb Boggs. He was a mainstream Republican. He was one of the guys who was very deeply engaged in setting up the situation in terms of the affordable—excuse me, the environmental legislation. He was a decent guy.

But I'd always get asked by every new person running for office—in Delaware, particularly—if it was their first time. They'd say, "What's the secret?" There had to be a secret if I won and if I was something special. And I said: "There is a secret. One, what do you—what's worth losing over to you? Have you figured out what's more important than having the job? What do you worth—what's worth risking losing over?" Because people can smell it. People can tell when you really mean it.

And there are certain changes that under no circumstance would any of us in this room make the kind of commitments that the Republicans are making now.

And the idea—for example, I don't—I don't think anybody should—I think you should be—will be a millionaire and a billionaire in America. Just pay a little bit of your fair share. Just pay your fair share. Not an exorbitant amount. Nothing over—you know, there's no one—in the proposals I've put forward, no one making less than \$400,000 would have a penny in their taxes raised. And there's—no one is going to be paying, like in days past, 60 percent or anything like that in taxes. We're talking in the 20s, in the 30s percentile, depending on income.

But these guys literally are proposing, unless they changed their mind again—proposing doing away with the IRS. Now, that sounds good, right? [*Laughter*] Except one thing: They

want—here's—they want to replace with a 30-percent sales tax. A 30-percent sales tax, which—meaning somebody who's a schoolteacher, a firefighter, or a cop would be paying more in taxes than you pay in this room, each one of you. Not a joke. And 30-percent sales tax—everything from your house to your car to your eggs that you purchase.

So I don't know what's gone haywire here with this Republican Party. But there's two things that I think we have to run on: what we stand for, what we did, and what we need to do more of, and what we're unwilling to do under any circumstances.

And part of that is to make clear to the Republican—to the country that we are not going to tolerate or put up with these MAGA Republicans, these Republicans in—you know, more than just—the Trump Republican Party. Thirty percent of that—30, 35 percent of that party is Trump's party. And he has a very different view.

And by the way, I can assure you windmills don't cause cancer. *[Laughter]* And so on. I mean, but think of the bizarre things that are still being proposed.

So there are enough Republicans, I believe, that—and Chuck has done it—that we can get help from on important things.

Leader Schumer. Yes.

The President. And there's enough Republicans in the House of Representatives now who, on very critical things, will vote with Democrats when they start talking about the really crazy stuff. But we can't take our eye off the ball. We can't take our eye off the ball.

And I'll conclude by saying—there are a couple things we have to do. We didn't get enough done on education this time out. The idea that all—is any—look, for example, when—when we—one of the reasons why we became the most powerful nation in the world is we were the best educated nation in the world, because at the turn of the 20th century, we were the only nation in the world that had universal education. Other countries had better higher education than we did. For example, in England and other places, on balance, it was better, but never overall, because we thought that 12 years of free education was necessary.

If we were doing it all over today, did anybody think we'd start and say 12 years is enough for 21st century—the second quarter of the 21st century? All the data shows, over the last 10 years, of great universities—and I won't go into the specific details, but—point out that if you're in a situation where you're going to a school, no matter what your background, no matter what home you came from, if you start off in school at age 3—reading, writing arithmetic—as opposed to daycare—daycare is better than not; I'm not being critical of daycare—you increase by 56 percent the chance you'll get through 12 years of school and go on to either an apprenticeship or 2 years in college.

Now, what are we doing? Our Republican friends voted against that idea—the idea that we shouldn't have access to 2 years of post-high school, either as apprenticeships and/or for community college. We can not only afford to do that, we can't afford not to do that. It's critical that we, in fact, improve our education system.

And by the way, that includes, believe it or not, paying teachers more. *[Laughter]* You know? No, I—no, I mean it.

You take a look prescription drug costs. Now, you know, I mean, even people who have means find themselves in real difficulty in terms of prescription drugs, in terms of the cost.

I remember when my son Beau, before he died—he had—he has ankylosing spondylitis, and he had a particular drug at the time they were taking. And it was—he took a shot; it was twice a month. And it cost \$3,000 a shot.

Now, he had a larger family. We could all help out. But the idea of someone paying \$3,000. Now, it's now—we've gotten that under control, that piece.

But the idea we pay—for example, what we're going—what's going to happen in 2025, just like—for example, the prescription drug costs for seniors—it should be for everyone—who are on—in fact, need insulin for type 2 diabetes, it's gone from an average of \$400, as high as \$800 a month, depending on the insurance you have, to \$35 a month. And guess what? They're still making 350—[inaudible]—percent profit. It costs 10 bucks to make it and another 2 bucks to package it.

And there was a patent that—the guy who decided, when he invented the drug—the insulin—he didn't even patent it because he wanted it available. Well, guess what? It makes no sense, drug companies charging multiple multiples of that.

And so we have to be in a situation where we have—and by the way, the beginning—we got passed—with the help of the men and women in this room, we got passed a—a drug—you cannot raise your price of a drug beyond the cost inflation now, or else what's going to be—because what's going to happen is the Federal Government coming to take a—charge you the difference—the drug company.

And in addition to that, anybody who is in a position where they have drug costs, beginning in 2025, no senior will have to pay more than \$2,000 a year. Some of the cancer drugs, as you all know, are \$14-, \$15,000 a year. They'll not have to pay more than \$2,000 a year.

Concluding point—and I realize I'm rambling a bit here. The concluding point I want to make to you is, it's really important we let people know what we've done. Let people know. Because we haven't—we haven't—it's only just kicking into place. We essentially promised people that insulin would be 35 bucks.

Well, we passed it 6, 8 months ago. It only kicked in in January. I'm finding people calling and saying: "My God, my insulin was only \$35. It's a gigantic difference." And by the way, there are 200,000 young kids who have type 2 diabetes. And a lot of parents have no ability to pay for the—[inaudible].

So I was in this town meeting not long ago, and I think it was in rural Virginia, and a woman stands up and says: "I have two daughters. They both have it. I can't afford the drug, so we—we cut it in half. We cut it in"—I mean, there's just—there's so many things, but we can now go out and make our case. And what I've done: I've set up an inter-Cabinet now that is called the "Implementation Cabinet." The existing Cabinet members whose job is to just do nothing but let people know what we have already done—what we've already done.

I'm sorry, I'm going to stop because I'm making you all cough. [Laughter]

But at any rate, so there's—there is a lot more to be done. And if we do just a little bit more in education and a little bit more in terms of health care, a little bit more in terms of what we're doing in terms of the environment, and a whole hell of a lot more on what we're going to spend—spending at one point \$2 trillion for infrastructure for the next 10 years. And we're creating thousands and thousands of good-paying jobs.

And by the way—by the way, I don't know where it's written that says we can't be the manufacturing capital of the world again. We used to spend 2 percent of our entire GDP on research and development investing in America. It's now 0.7 percent.

One of the reasons why I was able to attract \$300 billion in investment for semiconductor factories and construction is because we have the best workers in the world.

The Japanese—the—a Korean company is investing over \$100 billion. I asked "why" when I met with the CEO from South Korea. He said, "Because you have the best workers and the safest environment in which to do what you have to do."

So there's a lot—we underestimate what we have. And I'm going to—I'm determined—determined to make it better.

I have been doing this a long time, but I've never, never, never—my word as a Biden—been more optimistic about the prospects for America not only leading the world, but increasing—being the most economically viable nation in the world again.

That's what we can do. I'm going to, as my mother would say, "hush up, Joe." I'm talking too much. *[Laughter]* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. at the residence of Jeffrey A. and Stacey Gillis Weber. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Cory A. Booker and Kirsten E. Gillibrand; former President Donald J. Trump; President Emmanuel Macron of France; and philanthropist and activist Karen R. Adler. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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